
J O R N A D A P O S T

August
2003



SCOTT CUSTIS & JEANNE GOMOLL

Issue Number 2

This issue of *Jornada Post* is brought to you by Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis, who live at 2825 Union Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53704. 608-246-8857. Jeanne's email is ArtBrau@gdinet.com; Scott's email is sec@gdinet.com. This is *Jornada Post* #2, Obsessive Press #278, Peerless Press #1446. *Jornada Post* was created using a Power Macintosh G3, InDesign 2, Illustrator 9.0.2, Photoshop 6.0.1, and a Laserwriter Select 360. Display font is Rennie Macintosh. All contents copyright © 2003 by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, August 2003 for the Turbo-Charged Party Animal #206.

■ Business

[SC] I will also second Margo Nelson for *Turbo* apa, though I am concerned about her apparent affection for terrible puns per your comments on ConVergence (“Well, he is a ‘pop’ singer.”) I hope it isn’t so.

I will also repeat a second for Hal and Ulricka O’Brien that I published last month.

■ Pink Slip, Part 3

[JG] I’m writing this third and final installment of “Pink Slip” from the comfort of my home office. The axe fell on August 1, I went dancing (at my brother’s wedding) on August 2, and then went home on August 4 to face a chaotic situation: boxes lying all over my office floor. Boxes full of files, books, and portfolio materials that I used to keep in my DNR office, piles of papers stacked on every surface; it was a mess. So I went to work organizing. I moved fanzines and other files containing fannish work into boxes and onto shelves in the attic, moved the to-read books onto a bookshelf in our bedroom, and donated my bound copies of *Step-by-Step* to the Public Library. Then I filled the vacated file drawers and shelves with work-related files, books and supplies. It took me most of the week to get it all put away, although I did manage to get a bit of billable work done too, just the urgent jobs. Scott’s brother Jon visited and upgraded the electricity in my office. (What a guy! He had to work in the spider-infested crawl space under our house in order to put in the new wiring and he did it for free! I offered to take him out to any restaurant in town, but instead he suggested we order a pizza and rent a video. Pretty cheap repair bill!) I purchased the domain for unionstreetdesign.com, but I’m still having problems using it to receive or send email. That will get straightened out soon and then I’ll give you all a change-of-email address for me. I filed for my Federal EIN, arranged for a DSL connection (installation will happen next week, fingers crossed), and I’ll get my portfolio together this weekend, just in time to give a presentation on Thursday. My new printer arrived although I haven’t set it up yet. The legal forms book didn’t turn out to be as useful as I thought, mainly because the QuickBooks Pro software turned out to be so much *more* useful than I expected. It includes all the forms that I’ll need. I’d never have been able to figure out that program, though, if I wasn’t taking the Business Fundamentals course. That’s turned out really well for me because I REALLY needed to know about accounts receivable and payable and all that jazz. Ironically, it’s turning out that the thing I was most nervous about in terms of setting up a new business -- the *business* part of it -- is turning into a rather enjoyable new challenge. Learning all these new terms, and ways of thinking reminds me of traveling to Mexico and finding it easier to learn Spanish than there than in the classroom, because the knowledge was so obviously and immediately *useful*. That’s the way I feel when I’m taking notes in business class these days. Almost everything that is covered by the lecture connects specifically to something I need to deal with in my business now. In fact, I’m going to sign up for the next class too, the one on writing a business plan, because it looks like that will be a really good way to do the necessary marketing research for myself and get professional help while I’m at it.

I only did about 12 billable hours this week, but that’s not because I don’t have enough jobs. I’ll do more billables next week. Whoosh!

I think that sort of gives you a sense of what it’s felt like for me these past couple weeks. I still

have a two-page list of things that really should be done soon. Nevertheless, I'm starting to feel more calm. I can already tell that I will like working at home, I've got a really nice comfortable office. Everything is organized. Certainly it's nicer than any I've ever worked in at the DNR! I can play the radio if I like or turn it off and enjoy the quiet. I feel productive, and I really like the sense of control. Getting the financial stuff organized with QuickBooks Pro really made me feel more at ease, especially once I sent out a round of invoices! I'm sleeping better than I did in the last month when I tended to wake myself up several times a night with urgent thoughts of thing that I needed to do. I dropped off a job for a client at the DNR today, and as I left the building I realized I was feeling quite OK about not working there. Now, if I can just manage to do well financially, it will all be perfect. I may not get rich at this, but I really do think I've got a good chance at succeeding.

■ Mailing comments on Turbo № 205
Jerome Van Epps

[SC] I thought it was very interesting that you managed to talk Eric Heideman into working on a track of programming for Odd Con. I think he will be an interesting addition to programming, though some folks might be concerned that his ideas will be too sercon.

[JG] Kitchens have certainly gotten larger over the years. They used to be utilitarian in the extreme. In the 1700s, they were often located in separate buildings, to better keep the fire hazards, heat and smells from the main house. And, I suppose too, because it was the domain of servants. But now, kitchens are not only the domain of the lady and/or lord of the manor, but have become major social centers too. We've all noticed at parties how people tend to gravitate into the kitchens. Home design now arranges the rooms so that the kitchen is open to the family room, and each is an extension of the other, so that the person doing the food preparation doesn't feel exiled away from the rest of the family, but can join in the conversation. Eating, watching the cook, participatory cooking have all gotten tangled up as a social convention. Which I rather like. On the other hand, one of the reasons I was enthusiastic about the kitchen in the house that Scott and I bought was that there was enough separation between the dining/living area and the kitchen so that after dinner was over, the dirty dishes and cooking mess could be more easily hidden away.

I'm probably one of those people who would decide not to buy a house like yours because of the small kitchen. I would want it to be big enough for more than one person to cook at a time, and I'd want much more surface and storage space.

■ Lisa Freitag

[SC] I felt by the end of your article "The Day After Wiscon," that the tragic death of this child, Grant, left you feeling so bitter, angry and guilty that you lashed out with a puzzling attack on WisCon and feminism. I don't really see the connection. Kim's economic struggles might be better explained by asking whether your clinic permits her to belong to a union that might help her acquire a better salary and benefits, rather than blaming her problems on the failure of feminism. The argument that feminism is for "career women, not working women" was made and discredited as anti-feminist backlash nonsense 20 years ago.

"It is no surprise that Kim's ex is a jerk. Men, in Kim's world, are only slightly more useful than an extra child." Watch out, Lisa, your class conscious slip is showing here. What exactly do you, an upper middle class professional woman, know about "Kim's world" beyond the gossip you pick up around the office from other doctors? I think it is more than a little arrogant of you, in your position, to lecture men and women in this apa who may be much closer to living in "Kim's world" than you ever were.

I was most annoyed by your criticisms of WisCon. As a longtime volunteer, I am very proud of WisCon's commitment to women with children. Although you swept it aside in your article, we offer excellent child care FOR FREE, in addition to designated space and a whole track of programming aimed at older kids right up to teenagers. How many conventions of our size offer anything like this? Also our consuite staff has put a lot of work into food options that are both appealing and healthy for kids. As for the program, I shouldn't have to remind a longtime program participant like you that the program is a function of the panelists. There is no convention group mind that has set out to marginalize mothers. If mothers want more panels about kids and families, all they have to do is suggest them and volunteer to be on them. If the program is not satisfying you, Lisa, you are in an excellent position to change it.

"And the political issues around raising those children are every bit as important as issues like workplace equality." I couldn't agree more. And who has been fighting this political fight for the last 30 years, demanding better child care for workers, national health insurance to cover everyone including all the kids, better education, and welfare so single mothers can be home with their kids and not have to work all the time to make ends meet? Has it been men? Has it been the Republican Party? Has it even been the Democratic Party? Let me tell you, it has always been the women. Mostly the women in organizations like NOW, the very feminists you decry. Here is my advice for you. If you really care about these issues, put your money where your mouth is and join the fight. The kids could use your help.

[JG] You may not have meant your essay, "The Day After

WisCon” to have been read as an attack on feminism, but I had a hard time reading it in any other way. You wrote as if feminism is a sort of monolithic corporation that acts or fails to act in organized fashion. (“Feminism has taught women that...,” “Feminism seems to have left real women behind...”). And then you linked your critique of feminism specifically with WisCon—saying that like feminists in general, WisCon and its attendees also treat children as irrelevant and damaging to women’s career. So not only did I read your essay as an attack on feminism, but as an attack on me and other WisCon concom people

I disagree with your premise first of all, that there is one or even a majority opinion among feminists that disparages children and women parents. If anything, I perceive the majority of feminists to be working toward a greater appreciation of the work involved in being a parent and the importance of child-rearing (or adult-rearing) to the health of our culture. I read Suzy McKee Charnas’s *The Conqueror’s Child* as being first and foremost a champion of this idea.

Furthermore, you seem to equate your perception of problems (none of which would I attempt to diminish) of women’s struggles for economic survival, childcare issues, and specifically the fact that these problems still exist — as proof that feminists do not care about these issues. Is feminism irrelevant in your mind if it does not somehow manage to fix every problem involved in gender and sexual relations? We feminists share a variety of opinions and perceptions about problems; we share fewer opinions about the best way to solve those problems (but still, there’s a lot of overlap). I’m stunned by what I read you as saying that the fact that those problems exist (and exist even at WisCon) is something to *blame* upon feminism.

You wrote: “This is the real world, where most women are struggling, not for equality, but to get by for the next week. Feminism is not for those women. Feminism is for women with careers, not women with jobs. It is for woman who have time to think.” I read this as a bitter, angry attack on those who do not direct their political activism toward what you define as the most important battles.

Just as an example, do you believe that women writers should **not** be battling sexism in publishing standards, readership expectations, marketing standards and reviewing policies? If this is the focus in their lives, why not? I absolutely disagree with you that any person who chooses to be politically active in one area must therefore be viewed as incapable of understanding and supporting others in their political activism. In my opinion, we all benefit from joining forces with those whose lives are different from our own, but with whom we share goals -- living wages for all, universal health care, job and careers open to all and free from sexual or racial discrimination.

And I disagree with your interpretation of Carol Emsh-

willer’s Guest of Honor speech. I do not believe that Carol was apologizing to us for letting her parenting get in the way of her writing. She was simply telling us the way it had been for her as a mother. After the convention she wrote an email to me and told me how much she had enjoyed the convention and expressed the wish that she had belonged to a similar sort of community when she was raising her children. She didn’t say that she wished she hadn’t had children; she said that she wished she had had the support of a community *while* she raised her children and wrote her stories.

Finally, I do not understand and very much resent your suggestion that the tragedy that happened on the Minneapolis lake makes feminism irrelevant, including everything that happens at WisCon. One world is no more real than the other, nor less relevant to those involved in those worlds, especially when it seems from the phrases you use, that the worlds are upper class (in which “women have time to think”) and lower class (in which men “are only slightly more useful than and extra child”).

▣ **Andy Hooper**

[JG] I would most certainly NOT suggest that you should leave the apa because you don’t often participate in conversations here. The tone of my comments to you was indeed irritated, but that irritation did not stem from *what* you write or what I think of as performance mode vs. conversation mode. My irritation rose from your rather convoluted effort to redefine conversational apa-writing to encompass the kind of apa-writing that you do. This whole discussion started out a few issues ago when I wrote, “*You and I have had a long-term disagreement about whether the most valuable contributions to the apa are performances or conversation, and I see we still disagree.*” I would like to retract an adjective now (that word valuable), and say instead that I simply prefer conversation over performance contributions in apas. I like talking with you Andy, I miss the in-person conversations we used to have when you lived in Madison, and I wish we could reclaim that part of our friendship in *Turbo*. So, yeah, I wish there were more conversations going on between you and me. Nevertheless, I have always enjoyed whatever you have chosen to contribute to the apa. I apologize that my comments to you last month felt so harsh.

▣ **Carrie Root**

[JG] You should now be getting Pat’s reports from the South Pacific. We expect to hear from her next time when her ship docks at Cook Islands, sometime in early September.

Positions with the state sure aren’t considered “boring and secure anymore.” Friends at the DNR forwarded an official department email sent out by my former Division

chief this week, warning that the Division would take a 30-50% hit (in positions) by the time the next 3 rounds of layoffs were complete. I imagine that productivity has fallen to an all-time low there. Ironically (but not surprisingly) there was an article in the Cap Times last week featuring various Wisconsin Association of Manufacturers and Commerce types complaining that the DNR's permit issuing process has become unacceptably slow. Predictably, they suggest getting rid of the requirement for certain permits....

▣ Greg G.H. Rihn

[SC] *Barrymore* was enjoyable that night, but I reacted to it much as you did. I never really bought actor Lee Ernst as John Barrymore, he was a bit too obviously healthy and robust to be the aged actor two months before his death. This was the first time I'd seen Ernst since his spectacular turn as Cyrano De Bergerac, a role he was perfect for. His performance in that role remains one of my most treasured theater experiences. Your Milwaukee Rep stole him from us. We miss him.

Yours was one of the few positive reviews of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* I've seen. Not being familiar with the graphic novel it is based on, it all seems like a bizarre concept to me. Even the lure of Sean Connery could not convince us to take a chance on it. After reading your comments, maybe we will check it out on DVD.

We've been to see *Seabiscuit* which we both enjoyed. The choice of three understated actors, Jeff Bridges, Chris Cooper and Tobey Maquire all help to counteract the movie's tendency toward sentimentality. The movie's message of hope in a time of despair is played a little strong with the occasional voice over narration by *Civil War* voice David McCullough. The story also suffers a bit from the lack of conflict among the main characters, but these are small drawbacks. The movie is very well made, well acted and features great race footage. I was impressed enough to want to know more so I bought Lillian Hellenbrand's book.

[JG] I suppose "middle book syndrome" is one way to describe the somewhat disappointing plot doldrums of the most recent Harry Potter book. I felt rather cheated by the pre-book release publicity that told us that Dumbledore would finally explain "everything" to Harry, only to find that Dumbledore doesn't actually offer this information to Harry until very close to the end of the book, and that the information isn't exactly earth-shakingly new for us. I read one reviewer who admired the separation between kids and rescuing adults in this book which mirrored (the reviewer felt) the typical separation of adolescents and parents. I don't know. The plot contortions that prevented Harry from talking to Dumbledore and *visa versa* felt really contrived to me. I wanted more movement in the plot, though I think there was some good work done in fleshing out characterization, especially of Snape, Harry's

dad, and Ron. Of course I'll nevertheless be eager to read the next book as soon as it comes out!

You make an interesting point about Ernst's failure to convince us he was nearing death in his one-man performance, *Barrymore*. Certainly he convinced me he was just that in the final scene of *Cyrano!* That's my favorite Lee Ernst performance, and one of my favorite APT experiences too.

▣ Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I hadn't heard about the Supreme Court decision about libraries and anti-porn filters. What nonsense. I would like to know more about the case that actually prompted this decision and how the Court voted (split 5 to 4 again?)

You mentioned the program where libraries try to get folks in their cities to all read the same book. Madison has done this twice. Jeanne and I skipped the first choice probably because it didn't sound that interesting, but we did read this year's book choice, *Belcanto* by Ann Pratchet. The story was about a world famous opera singer who travels to an unspecified South American country to sing at the birthday party for the country's President at the home of the Vice President. The President doesn't show up, but terrorists do. They take everyone at the party hostage and proceed to settle in for a long siege. The relationships that develop between the hostages and the terrorists constitutes the story and we both really enjoyed it. Unfortunately the book discussion groups were mostly held during the Spring which was a very bad time of year for us this year, so we missed them. I am still glad I read the book. We had some good discussions just by ourselves.

[JG] What a lovely scene to contemplate, you driving a car broadcasting Handel's Water Music to the streets, and people looking around in confusion.

Ah yes, those lovely red-all-the-way-through strawberries! We scored one pint of them when they first appeared at the farmer's market, and then had to miss the next two farmer's markets for good reasons, I'm sure. But we were so disappointed when we returned the next Saturday morning to find that we'd missed the rest of strawberry season! We consoled ourselves with raspberries and I made crepes with them the next morning.

I was also struck by how timely Rowling's fascist crackdown was to the world today. (Scalia as Death Eater indeed. That's good!) Another thing I was struck by was that she did not try to do any plot summarizing to remind readers what had happened in the previous book. That's pretty amazing. She took for granted that almost everyone who reads book 5 will have read books 1-4 once or more, and that they all remember what happened in book 4 well enough to need no review. A couple times I wished I'd re-read book 4 more recently. I couldn't remember at first just

what a Death-Eater did. Rowling doesn't help; nowhere in the book does any ignorant character get told just why these folks are so gruesome....

Thanks for your good wishes Georgie. I think you're right about my fears being mostly made up of "composer's nerves." Certainly I don't think I've ever been even close to despairing through this whole experience. In fact I've been nervously waiting to hit a period of depression, but haven't yet. There were a couple days after getting my "at risk" letter when I came home and didn't want to do anything other than zone out in front of the TV, but I seemed to pull out of that quickly as soon as I started making up a list of things I needed to do.

▣ **Jeannie Bergmann**

[SC] So have you finalized the house deal? Congratulations to you in that event. About how far out of Madison do you figure you will be? Sounds like a lovely place and it is cool that you are already making plans for things you want to add and fix up. Any luck on the job front?

[JG] I haven't heard anything yet about the Medical School job for which I applied in June. Apparently they won't even be doing interviews until late Fall. But I'm glad about the delay. It will give me time to try out this freelance business, during which time I can make up the financial difference with unemployment checks. So far, in these first two weeks of Union Street Design, I've been getting enough work from former DNR clients to do that. It's a bit nerve-wracking, worrying about whether that will continue, it's true, and I don't like to constantly worry about that, but if I was still at the DNR I'd be constantly worrying about getting laid off, so what's the difference? My plan is to diversify my client base and to develop a reasonable marketing plan so that in a couple years when the DNR inevitably decides they have to hire in-house designers again, and we get called up for reinstatement, I will have the freedom to choose not to go back. As for the DNR "higher-ups who think anyone with minimal computer skills can do graphic design," well they're stymied right now. The archives we left behind are all compressed with Stuffit and they're having troubles just getting the files opened to see what's inside, much less figuring out that it's not going to be so easy to use out files without extensive experience in Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. Of course Stuffit Expander is available for free on-line; it should be easy to open those files. But the problem is that the DNR IT staff fixed everyone's computers so that only those folks in Desktop Support have "administrative privileges" which permit them to install software. Unfortunately, most of the desktop support staff were laid off at the same time I was. So people are looking at the cds we left them and wondering, "now what?"

▣ **Ruth Nichols**

[SC] It is a little difficult for me to judge how serious Mia's crime was since I don't know the particulars, but, having worked many years in prisons and mental institutions, it is my feeling that no one really belongs there unless they pose an actual serious threat to themselves or the public, and I have a real hard time seeing Mia posing a serious threat to anyone. It is a shame she got caught up in a system that is so heavily driven by fear and politics. In a more enlightened world, our jail and prison space would be taken up by only the violent and the threatening, everyone else would be undergoing treatment and/or working to support themselves and provide restitution to victims.

I am sorry we couldn't make it to Mia's party. The wedding of a close family member got in the way. I know that jail will likely be a tough experience for her and I hope she gets through it OK. Your support for her in this difficult time will mean a lot.

[JG] I'm sorry you and Mia and the rest of your family are going through this difficult experience. Go with your instincts Ruth ... write about it. That should at least help you put events and your thoughts into a sort of context, and maybe it will help others as well.

▣ **Tom Havighurst**

[SC] Continued good luck to you and JJ on the house hunt. Keep us posted. The Warner Park area is nice. I like that you aren't looking too far out in the 'burbs. So when are you and JJ going to sign up for a joint membership in the apa? I ask because I wondered if she knew you were referring to her as "Bunnyrabbit" in print.

[JG] I'm glad your friends ignored your advice not to come to the funeral and decided to be there for you anyway. You've got good friends and a wonderful sweetie it sounds like.

Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis
18 August 2003